

The Epworth League Convention at Seattle

The Impressions of an Epworth Leaguer en route to the Convention—Third Article.

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THE programme, which pardonably boasted that not a single advertisement was to be found in its pages, bore the title, "Eighth International Epworth League Convention." This was a misnomer. It was a National Epworth League Convention, with a small, valiant Canadian contingent attached—a brave contingent which had traversed a continent in its pilgrimage to Seattle. Not one single country outside the United States, save Canada, was represented. The United States, not to mention Canada, has large missionary churches in China, India and the Malay Peninsula, but evidently the word "International" did not include them, any more than it included the numerous M. E. missions in continental Europe and the near East. This was the more disappointing because Seattle is desirous of being considered as the gateway to the Orient.

In no hypercritical mood does the writer suggest that the lack of the international spirit was observable throughout the earlier part of the convention. At first, it seemed extremely difficult for the American section to remember the Canadian Epworth Leaguers from the north and east, and yet the utmost courtesy and enthusiasm had been shown by the various delegations which the Canadians met en route.

In the Armoury, where the convention was held, the enormous preponderance of American flags was proverbial, but a certain incident, in the writer's opinion, bore more significance in the direction of lack of international esprit de corps.

The subject of discussion was "Christ Enthroned in the Nation," with several divisions, as "in the political, the industrial life, etc." An American minister had eulogised the political life of the United States, and at the psychological moment the convention choir leader started the American National Anthem, which the audience sang with lusty vigour. But at the close of this, when a bold Canadian away back in the audience started "God Save the King," the response was not quite so enthusiastic as might have been reasonably expected. It is only fair to add that this state of affairs was considerably improved towards the close of the convention. But more of this anon.

One of the object lessons easily learned at the convention was the fact that whatever may be the calibre of the rank and file of the American Methodist ministry, the bishops, like the United States presidents, are men of strong personality and of great devotion to their ideals. In this connection comparisons are odious, but Bishop Quayle, president of the Epworth League of the M. E. Church, was easily first in popular esteem; he is a born speaker and lecturer, Johnsonian in appearance, but with rippling humour in his address.

The subjects for discussion which are of international interest were: "Christ Enthroned Among Men," "Christ Enthroned in the Nation." Each subject had subdivisions and thirty minutes was allowed to each speaker.

Bishop Hughes, M. E. Church, made a valuable contribution to the subject of "Christ Enthroned in Man's Intellectual Life." But Bishop Warren's address—really a paper read—on "Man, the World's Greatest Asset," suffered from the typical American failing of grandiloquence; his point, however, that character in activity was the only vital contribution man could make, was well taken. But of all the speakers hitherto, the most salient divisions of

thought were contributed by Dr. Du Boise, who supplied for Bishop Galloway. He characterised the condition of our citizenship in the nation to-day as fraught with the danger of a trinity of evils: First, the god of wealth; second, enslavement of our whole Christian system of education; thirdly a pantheistic psychology by which individual moral responsibility is minimised.

Bishop Hendrics, from the south, suggested that the most undesirable citizens of the States were not necessarily foreign born. It was also refreshing to hear a southerner speak well of the negro

vention one may moralise indefinitely, but a few words may suffice.

In the first place I have already pointed out that, in the main, the convention lacked international features; one further word therefore will suffice. It was not international in the sense that the recent Woman's Congress was international; but everywhere the Canadians were most kindly treated and the arrangements for excursions, information, etc., were well planned. It was common to meet persons in the streets wearing a League badge, which bore the legend "Ask me," i.e., for information.

The potentiality of the convention to Epworth Leaguers is undoubted, but its boundaries in this direction would have been increased with more attractions for the so-called unregenerate.

To all Canadians, standing as Canada does at the parting of the ways, the words of Dr. Sheppard of Chicago should be laden with much food for thought. Referring to the question of immigration he said: "We have never doubted the providence of God at the Dispersion, shall we doubt him at the ingathering?"

Whatever Canadians may think of immigration there can be no possible room for doubt that in the United States opinion is very much divided as to the wisdom of shutting out any healthy class of people coming from Europe. America presents the spectacle to-day of the ingathering of the nations, and

in the main Americans are optimistic as to results. But one note of criticism may not prove inopportune. As a rule American orators who favour indiscriminate immigration from Europe, rarely consider the potentiality of the following question: "How far has the Latin, Slav and Magyar modified, to its detriment, the original Anglo-Saxon?" The writer may be pardoned for intruding his own moralisation, but during years of residence in the United States this question has frequently forced itself upon him. It is not a question of mere breaches of civil and moral law, but of radical differences in habits of mind and life.

In the question of suggestiveness of future Canadian problems, the convention should prove invaluable to the one hundred Canadians in the party. However, though the Canadian delegates gave a splendid account of themselves in the person of Rev. S. T. Bartlett, Rev. W. T. Smith (president of London Conference), and Dr. Chown, one could have wished that the Canadian Epworth League had sent, in the language of the advertisements, a greater galaxy of talent. It is the fashion of Uncle Sam to treat Johnny Canuck lightly, therefore we wished the Maple Leaf to have been shown to the best possible advantage.

It seemed a matter to be regretted that on an occasion of this kind when every opportunity offered, a greater effort was not made to show our cousins across the border the full strength of our institution in Canada.

It is a much-to-be-lamented fact that all societies of this kind feel it their duty to have special hymn books, containing a large number of new and popular hymns. Some of the new hymns are good; most of them are at best mediocre, and are not to be compared with the standard hymns of any leading denomination. We deplore the effect of the "Sunday Illustrated" on the artistic tastes of our young people; why not deplore the effect of doggerel hymnology on the poetic and musical taste of Epworth Leaguers?



A Main Thoroughfare at the Seattle Exposition.

in the person of Booker T. Washington. In this connection Rev. Dr. Coleman of New York made several forceful remarks. He was absolutely in favour of admitting all, even the Chinese, if they were willing to be men as citizens. Dr. Coleman had a way of asking people who objected to emigrants where they, the objectors, came from originally.

It were futile to attempt even a brief resume of the numerous addresses; it were equally futile to suggest that many of our American friends were not eloquently suggestive; but it were equally futile to deny that they, mainly, lacked originality and statesmanship in their speeches; and notwithstanding many good things uttered, there was, with few exceptions, a decided tendency to deliver eloquent orations on idealistic themes, rather than thoughtful addresses on practical topics.

It is in no partisan Canadian spirit that I suggest that our own Dr. Chown stands out in conspicuous and pleasing contrast in this matter. He had convictions and committed himself to definite statements. Whilst not finding a solution in socialism to the industrial problems of the age, he did not consider modern competition as Christian. His salient attack on all classes of idlers and all unrighteous methods of making money, were calculated to stimulate thought.

A decided change of feeling in favour of the international character of the convention took place on Friday, when the Rev. S. T. Bartlett, general secretary of Canadian Leagues, addressed the convention on "The Enthroning Hosts." "The Maple Leaf" was sung at the instigation of an American. At the close of the singing Mr. Bartlett pointed out that the convention banner included the British flag which in Canada was supreme. This demonstration was well received, as was also his speech, and at last our American cousins began to realise that Canada was alive—that there was indeed a Canadian delegation.

On the general tenor and influence of the con-